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HDF 345 – Peer Relationships

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Infant and Toddler Relationships

In the book, *Children's Friendships: The Beginnings of Intimacy* (2006), Judy Dunn looks into the beginning of childhood friendships and determines what kind of impact they have on children. In Chapter 2 of her book, she specifically focuses on the creation of friendships during early childhood including infancy and up to toddlerhood and finds Through her analysis of the work of many psychoanalysts, she proves this statement to be false by concluding that children that young are actually capable of forming connections with other children by sharing their interests and ideas with each other.

She starts off the chapter noting how many psychologists tend to believe friendships cannot happen during this age range based on the premise and belief that such young children are not capable of forming, establishing, and understanding connections with other people. To further falsify this theory and show that friendship was prevalent at such an early age she looked into the impact of sibling relationships. She concluded that many siblings were able to provide comfort to each other, whether in times of joy and distress, in the absence of their mother. Once a child is able to establish a relationship, they can take those skills into the outside world and form connections with people beyond their own family. Another piece of evidence she used to further explain her theory was the evaluation of the lighthearted nature of children. The joy, warmth, and awareness that children in their early years of life show is evidence enough for the kinds of friendships and relationships that they are capable of creating with their own peers.

Within each of the friendships that are formed early on, Dunn stated that there were three common characteristics: evidence of stability, reciprocal quality of friendships, and level of sophistication. She finishes off the chapter by reiterating her key point that if children have the opportunity to spend time with other children and get to know them well, then they have the ability to take that relationship to the next level creating a mutual agreement between each other.

The chapter and the book proved to be reliable as it was able to provide many different studies and research that supported each of the major issues. Although, the research and methodology could have been clarified as it failed to go into detail as she gave broad overviews of the whole process. Each of the research that she used, provided a different perspective into many different lifestyles and identities. Through her ability to use research from many different backgrounds, many of the samples that she used are still applicable to today's population.

Dunn, J. (2006). *Childrens' friendships: The beginnings of intimacy*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.